during the SAARC Summit; in New York on 23 September, 1997 on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Session; and in Edinbargh on 25 October, 1997 when the two met for the Commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting.

These meetings renewed the process of dialogue at the highest political level between the two countries, which is significant in itself. The meetings provided an opportunity for the reiteration of our disire to establish a relationship of trust, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan, while strongly emphasising our serious concern regarding Pakistani activities which impinge adversely on our security and national interest.

Prime Minister conveyed our serious concern at Pakistan's support and promotion of infiltration and cross-border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir, and the need to put an end to such hostile activities. He also conveyed our strong concern about the unprovoked firing by Pakistani forces along the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir which have resulted in loss of innocent civilian lives. Prime Minister emphasised that this must end, and better communications and arrangements must be established between the defence forces of the two countries along the Line of Control and the International Boundary in Jammu and Kashmir.

Humanitarian aspects of the relationship were also discussed and our desire to promote people-to-people interaction between the two countries was reiterated. To promote greater contacts between the peoples and to encourage interaction amongst academicians, journalists, scholars, businessmen, steps have been taken by us to liberalise the visa regime. It was also decided to release the fishermen in the custody of the two countries. The issue of missing Indian defence personnel, believed to be in Pakistan's custody, was taken up. Pakistan maintained that no Indian POWs are under detention in Pakistan.

The two countries are currently engaged, at the level of Foreign Secretaries, in addressing the modalities of bilateral dialogue. We would like these modalities to be such as to ensure comprehensive, constructive and sustained discussions between the two sides. Prime Minister conveyed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan our commitment to carry forward the bilateral dialogue.

Cataract Blindness

*8. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated number of blind persons in the country;

(b) whether cataract is the main cause of their blindness;

(c) whether the Government have taken a decision to hold mega eye-camps to perform cataract operations;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the World Bank has given financial aid for the Cataract Control project; and

(f) if so, the achievements made so far to control cataract blindness?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY) : (a) On the basis of national survey of 1986-89, it is estimated that there are more than 12 million economically blind persons in the country. 2 million new cataract cases are added each year.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Government has taken a decision to organise mega eye camps in under-served including tribal areas of the country on fixed dates in two phases:

Phase I	—	1 to 6 Oct., 1997
Phase II	—	30 Jan. to 4 Feb. 1998

It is proposed to conduct 5 lakhs additional cataract operations during these weeks.

(e) Yes, Sir. A World Bank assisted Cataract Blindness Control Project is being implemented since April, 1994 in 7 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu & Uttar Pradesh.

(f) The targets and achievements for cataract operations under World Bank Project are as follows:

(In lakhs)

Year	Target	Achievement
1994-95	14.6	12.8 (88%)
1995-96	15.5	15.0 (97%)
1996-97	16.5	17.1 (103%)